

Message Text

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17

ACTION DPW-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-10 ISO-00 DHA-02 SCS-03 SS-15

PM-04 L-03 H-02 NSC-05 SCA-01 ORM-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SSO-00 INRE-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 /079 W

----- 059444

O R 300424Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3452

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE IMMEDIATE

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 22756

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, UNHCR, VS

SUBJECT: AMERICANS IN SOUTH VIET-NAM: PRESS HANDLING

REF: STATE 256615

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING ARE EMBASSY'S SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESS HANDLING AND GUIDANCE ON ARRIVAL OF AMERICANS FROM HANOI IN BANGKOK OCT 30. END SUMMARY.

1. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE PRESS INTEREST IN BANGKOK OVER THE OCTOBER 30 PLANNED ARRIVAL OF THE FOURTEEN AMERICANS AND OTHERS FROM HANOI. IN RECENT DAYS THIS EMBASSY HAS BEEN DISCUSSING WITH THE UNHCR, OTHER CONCERNED EMBASSIES, AND ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS CMA, THE BEST WAY OF PROTECTING THE FOURTEEN WHILE AT THE SAME TIME MEETING AT LEAST THE MINIMAL NEEDS OF THE PRESS CORPS.

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2. WE HAVE SUGGESTED TO UNHCR THAT, PURELY ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS, THOSE WHO AGREE TO MEET THE PRESS IN A BRIEF, GROUP NEWS CONFERENCE DO SO SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVAL AT AIRPORT HERE, FOLLOWING A FIFTEEN MINUTE PERIOD DURING WHICH THEY SIT DOWN WITH FRIENDS. IF THOSE SO AGREEING WISH TO CHOOSE A SPOKESMAN WHO WOULD ANSWER QUESTIONS, WHILE THE OTHERS GATHERED AROUND, THIS MIGHT BE A WAY OF HANDLING MATTER. AFTER 5-10 MINUTES OF QUESTIONING, WE WOULD HOPE CONFERENCE COULD BE TERMINATED. EMBASSY BELIEVES THIS METHOD WOULD BE LESS CHAOTIC THAN FOR EACH REPORTER TO GRAB THE FOURTEEN--SOME WILLING AND OTHERS UNWILLING--AND QUESTION THEM INDIVIDUALLY.

3. UNHCR OFFICE BANGKOK INITIALLY SAID IT HAD NO INTENTION OF HANDLING THE MEDIA. WHEN PRESSED AND REMINDED THAT THIS WAS ITS SHOW RATHER THAN OURS, UNHCR CONTROL OFFICER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE HAD BEEN DISCUSSIONS WITH UNHCR GENEVA REP CASELLA ON THIS SUBJECT AND THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO TAKE THE LEAD UPON ARRIVAL IN BANGKOK WITH THE FOURTEEN.

4. OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH ORGANIZATIONS AND EMBASSIES HERE INDICATE THAT CMA, FORD FOUNDATION, SIL/WYCLIFFE, AND THE PHILIPPINE EMBASSY ARE AGREEABLE TO THIS APPROACH, PROVIDED DECISION IS LEFT UP TO THE INDIVIDUAL. AUSTRALIANS ARE MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO SHIP WHITLOCK HOME ON FLIGHT DEPARTING AT 1700 OCTOBER 30 AND, SHOULD THIS SUCCEED, WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE. ONLY CANADIAN EMBASSY DISAGREES, STATING THAT ITS PEOPLE WILL BE TIRED AND, EVEN IF THEY ARE AGREEABLE TO INTERVIEW, WILL MEET ONLY WITH CANADIAN PRESS.

5. FOR VIENTIANE: IF YOU SEE NO OBJECTION AND IF PLANE STOPS IN VIENTIANE, REQUEST YOU INFORM AMERICANS ON FLIGHT OF SUBSTANCE OF FOREGOING, SO THEY CAN BE THINKING ABOUT IT DURING THE VIENTIANE-BANGKOK LEG OF TRIP. ALSO REQUEST THAT YOU IMPRESS UPON CASELLA THE NEED FOR HIM OR SOMEONE FROM UNHCR TO TAKE CHARGE OF WHATEVER PRESS OPERATION OCCURS. (EMBASSY PRESS ATTACHE MORELY WILL BE ON HAND TO GIVE ASSISTANCE BUT WILL NOT TAKE CONFIDENTIAL

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THE LEAD IN WHAT SHOULD NOT BE AN AMERICAN SHOW.)

6. SINCE ABOVE DRAFTED, REFTTEL HAS COME IN. BELIEVE SUGGESTIONS IN IT ARE CONSISTENT WITH PARAGRAPHS ABOVE. ARRIVAL ARRANGEMENTS MAY WELL BE VERY CONFUSED, BUT EFFORTS WE HAVE MADE SO FAR MAY REDUCE COMPLICATIONS

TO SOME EXTENT.

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